



Barnes Literary Society Annual General Meeting 2016

Minutes of the AGM held on 23 March 2016 at the OSO Arts Centre, Barnes Green.

Present: Claire Boyling, Chairman, David King-Farlow, Vice-Chairman, Jane Skerrett, Honorary Secretary, Patrick Harvey, Honorary Treasurer, Sarah Kearney, Caroline Kelsall, Kathy Owles committee members, Fiona Smith, Patron, together with 25 society members.

1. Introduction by Chairman

Claire Boyling welcomed members and thanked them for staying on for the AGM and referred them to the agenda, minutes from last year's AGM, and annual report for the year ended September 2015 which had been distributed to those present.

2. Apologies for absence

Isla Blair, Julian Glover, Roger McGough, Jan Pieńkowski, Emma King-Farlow

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 22 April 2015

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Sue Boyd and seconded by Celia Cleave as an accurate record and the resolution to approve the minutes was passed on a show of hands.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's annual report

This is my second annual report as chairman. We opened the season in October 2014 with Sarah Dunant who opened our eyes to the glorious art of Florence and the lives of the Borgia family in Renaissance Italy. At our second event we were honoured to welcome Helen Macdonald to talk about her book 'H is for Hawk'. Helen has since won several prestigious book prizes and we were very lucky to hear first hand of her unusual life and the healing of her grief through caring for a hawk.

Our third speaker was journalist and writer Sathnam Sanghera whose book *Marriage Material* is a satirical take on race relations in the Midlands. His pithy take on life as a Sikh in Britain opened our eyes to a very different culture. In February Jason Hewitt and Antonia Hodgson told us about their novels and the experience of being debut authors and in March Alan Johnson MP enthralled us with his account of life as a boy in West London and the

delights of being a postman based at the Old Sorting Office in Barnes. Our last speaker event of the season was Harriett Gilbert who told us about her two radio book programmes, the guests featured and her recommendations for 'A Good Read'. The details are on the BLS website.

We organised an outing to Strawberry Hill House, Sir Horace Walpole's Gothic castle in Twickenham, where we enjoyed a fascinating tour and many of us stayed on for a light lunch. If you haven't been I do recommend it. Our final event was our summer party where we made a return visit to the Depot for supper and great entertainment provided by Rodger Hayward Smith and Anne Blake based on the writings of T S Eliot and Lewis Carroll.

We have been delighted to welcome our patrons, Isla Blair, Julian Glover and Roger McGough, to some of our events and to have the support of Jan Pieńkowski who once again designed our brochure. We do count ourselves fortunate to have patrons so actively interested in our society.

Links with the local community are very important to us. We took part in the BCA organised Societies Day in May and we again sponsored the prizes for the two Poets Laureate in the Arts Richmond Young Writers' Festival. We also gave encouragement and publicity to the first Barnes Children's Literature Festival which was held in May.

The support of Isla Dawes in Barnes book shop, her regular donation of a voucher for the raffle prize and her attendance at all events with the speakers' books, is greatly appreciated as is the coverage of our activities in the BCA's 'Prospect', 'Living In' magazine and other local publications. We also value the management of our website by Anne Cotgreave at Skinny Cat Design. Thanks too to the OSO who have hosted most of our evenings, to the Methodist Church for hosting our first event and especial thanks to Alan Trehwitt at AT Sound for his invaluable technical expertise and advice. We know from members' comments just how much you appreciate the quality of sound at our events.

No society such as ours would be successful if it were not for our committee who have worked imaginatively and enthusiastically during the year and have given me such unstinting support. And most importantly, I thank you, our members, who continue to attend our events and encourage our efforts. We have enjoyed excellent attendance with full houses for nearly every meeting.

I have been part of the BLS organising committee for twelve years, since its inception, the last two as chair, and it is now time for me to pass the baton. I am delighted that Jane Skerrett is stepping up to take the Chair and I look forward to taking a back seat – literally - and just enjoying the talks!

6. Honorary Treasurer's report & statement of accounts

Patrick Harvey, honorary treasurer, referred members to the financial report for the year ended September 2015, copies of which were available. If you turn to page 4 of the report you will find the income and expenditure statement. Subscriptions form the bulk of our income. This was the first year we had the benefit of the recent subscription increase, raising £8,200, accompanied by an increase in guest fees. On the expenditure side, I am presenting a more detailed breakdown of our costs

including hire (OSO/Methodist church), hire of sound system, speakers' fees and chair hire. The total of these direct costs for the six regular events last year represent a cost of £1,000 per event.

I also present a more detailed breakdown of indirect costs to show the costs of postage and stationery (communicating directly with members), printing and copying of our brochure and reports and venue flowers. Much of our publicity is free, thanks to BCA 'Prospect' and local magazines, but we also pay to advertise. Other indirect costs include the three year bursary for Arts Richmond children's literature prizes, and our website, insurance, and accounting.

The other significant items on the income and expenditure figures relate to expenditure on special events which can be set against income from these ticketed events. These include a literary outing and the summer party, where there was a small loss. The extraordinary income was compensation paid by our bank, HSBC, following an unauthorised debit against our account. So the net result was a reduced deficit for the year of £177 compared with £1,279 the previous year.

If you now turn to page 5 of the report, you will find the society's balance sheet. This includes some subscriptions for 2015-6 received before the beginning of the financial year in October, so the net financial assets at the end of the year have to be adjusted - to £4,888. This is kept on deposit, but we will need to draw on the deposit to finance operations this year.

That summarises our financial report which has been signed by our independent examiner, John Forbes. There were no questions on the report.

7. Adoption of the annual report and 2014-2015 accounts

My recommendation as your treasurer is that you approve the accounts as presented. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Jill Simeoni and seconded by Sheila Hayward Smith and passed by a show of hands.

8. Approval of the rates of subscription

The proposal is that the current rates of subscription remain in place for the coming year (£30 for a single membership and £50 for a joint one). This was proposed by Steve Perry and seconded by Lucy Hine and approved on a show of hands.

9. Election of officers and members of the committee

The chairman confirmed that she is standing down as chairman and Jane Skerrett is nominated as her replacement. Noel Davison is nominated to replace Jane Skerrett as honorary secretary. The nominations and proposers and seconders are as follows:

Post	Name	Proposer	Secunder
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Chairman	Jane Skerrett	Sheila Hayward Smith	Jill Simeoni
Vice Chair	David King-Farlow	Fiona Smith	Lucy Hine
Honorary Secretary	Noel Davison	William Mortimer	Maria Harvey
Honorary Treasurer	Patrick Harvey	William Mortimer	Carol Sweet
Committee member	Sarah Kearney	Celia Cleave	Brian Cleave
Committee member	Caroline Kelsall	John Brocklebank	Claire Boyling
Committee member	Kathy Owles	Jill Simeoni	John Smith

The officers and committee members were proposed by Heather Parkinson and seconded by Fiona Smith and duly elected en bloc on a show of hands.

10. Any other business

There was no further business. The chairman thanked the members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

It should be noted that at the end of the meeting with Diana Darke but before the AGM, when all the members who had attended the event were still present, Claire Boyling the outgoing chairman, had been thanked by the incoming chairman for her long service on the BLS committee first as honorary secretary and for the last two years as chairman. Claire had been an exemplary chairman: courteous, inclusive and charming (and firm where this was required!) Claire was then presented with a bouquet from the BLS committee to mark their appreciation.